

Former Admiral Urges Senate to Ratify Historic Nuclear Weapons Agreement This Year

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Media, Pa. - Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) expressed his continuing support today for the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and urged his colleagues in the Senate to move swiftly towards ratification in the remaining weeks of the 111th Congress.

“This treaty should be ratified for one reason: it enhances our national security. It accomplishes this by reducing the number of nuclear weapons held on hair-trigger alert by the two powers which control 90 percent of the world’s supply. It also restores on-site inspections and helps assure us that nuclear weapons will not fall into the hands of terrorists. The treaty is the successful result of efforts to ‘push the reset button’ on U.S.-Russian ties after eight years of tension under President Bush,” said the Congressman.

“The goodwill that these arms control measures generate has historically provided both sides with the confidence and political capital to cooperate in a number of other areas, such as the enforcement of multilateral sanctions against Iran in the U.N. Security Council. This treaty demonstrates that we have the ability to reach agreement with Russia on divisive issues and can continue to pursue their cooperation on a variety of initiatives,” the Congressman continued.

However, the future of this landmark agreement is by no means certain, as it must be ratified by both the United States Senate and Russian Duma. After learning that Senator Jon Kyl, the Senate Minority Whip, would work to prevent a vote on the treaty this year, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister stated that "the Russian leadership's line that the ratification processes in Russia and the U.S. should be synchronized remains fully valid."

"I remain concerned that some may play partisan politics with our national security. Similar recalcitrance prevented ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty during the 1990s, which has continued to provide other nations with justification to operate outside the international mainstream on nuclear issues," said the Congressman.

"Arms control has historically never been a partisan issue. National security titans from both parties such as Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, John Warner, and Richard Lugar, the current Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, all support this vital effort. Yet some Republicans in the Senate continue to delay this treaty's ratification, even after the President repeatedly assured them that it will not weaken our Nation's missile defense and pledged an additional \$14 billion in nuclear infrastructure funding," the Congressman continued.

"The intelligence community has also made it clear that it needs a follow-on START agreement in order to restore on-site inspections of Russia's nuclear arsenal, which came to a halt when the previous treaty expired. Without this authority, we may need to begin re-rerouting our satellites away from theatres of operation in Afghanistan and Iraq to provide the necessary

surveillance and potentially put our forces in jeopardy," said the Congressman.

"It is also worth noting that the successful ratification of this treaty may have a direct bearing on the willingness of non-nuclear states to continue to operate within the tenets of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and forgo attaining weapons. As a nuclear power, the United States is obliged under this treaty to work towards the eventual eradication of nuclear weapons, a long-term goal which I support in principle. I urge the Senate to ratify this treaty in the remaining weeks of the 111th Congress."

On December 5, 2009, the historic Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), expired. START was the largest arms control agreement in history and was ratified after a decade of negotiations with the Soviet Union. This historic agreement was instrumental in reducing Cold War nuclear tensions and establishing precedents for inspection and verification measures that provide both sides with confidence about the other's arsenal.

Under the terms of the new treaty, signed in April, the United States and Russia will cut by one third their numbers of deployed strategic weapons. The agreement contains stringent verification regimes which, according to Secretary Gates, provide our intelligence community the tools they need to assess Russian compliance with the treaty's terms.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a

series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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